

# An allusion found in “A Retrieved Reformation”

## Literature in context

### *Allusions: The Phoenix*

**Definition:** An allusion is a reference in a work of literature to a person, place, or thing in another artistic work (literature, art, music, history, painting, or mythology).

**Example:** O. Henry writes, "Mr. Ralph Spencer, the phoenix that arose from Jimmy Valentine's ashes ..."

The allusion here is to the phoenix, a mythical bird of the Arabian wilderness. It was believed to die flames every 500 or 600 years. Then, the phoenix would be reborn, rising from its ashes.

**Purpose:** The allusion helps readers understand that Jimmy Valentine has completely reinvented himself as Ralph Spencer.